

# LIGHT READING

customer newsletter



Jan/Feb 2008

## Storm season is here

Stormy weather is the leading cause of power outages. This can include damage to the overhead and underground electrical distribution system.

You can prepare for a power outage by having an emergency kit ready at home, in your car, and place of work. To learn more about what to put into an emergency kit and how to be prepared, please visit City Light's Website at [www.seattle.gov/light/](http://www.seattle.gov/light/) or [www.seattle.gov/emergency/](http://www.seattle.gov/emergency/) or [www.govlink.org/3days3ways/](http://www.govlink.org/3days3ways/).

The windstorm of December 2006 resulted in several recommendations for City Light to improve its response and restoration performance. You can read all of the recommendations in a report to the Seattle City Council posted at [www.seattle.gov/light/news/Docs/DCI\\_SeattleCityCouncilFinalReport.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/light/news/Docs/DCI_SeattleCityCouncilFinalReport.pdf).

Here is what we have accomplished:

- ✓ Trimmed 150 miles of trees away from power lines;
- ✓ Obtained 77 "mutual aid" agreements to bring help from other utilities if we need it;
- ✓ Increased trained and available field staff from 200 to 600 people;
- ✓ Received approval from the Mayor and City Council (2008 budget) for 53 new line worker positions.



While we still have many more improvements to make, these changes already have resulted in significant improvements. In 2006, we restored an average of 833 customers per hour after a windstorm. That number jumped to 2,222 per hour in October 2007. Our goal is to improve reliability and customer service. We will update you periodically with our progress.

## Fast facts about compact fluorescent bulbs (CFBs) and mercury



As part of Mayor Greg Nickels' Climate Action Now effort, City Light's **Twist and Save Program** gives customers deep discounts when they purchase ENERGY STAR CFBs. To locate participating retailers visit [www.seattle.gov/twistandsave](http://www.seattle.gov/twistandsave).

- City Light created this program as an energy conservation measure because CFBs use about 75% less energy and last about ten times longer than regular bulbs.
- CFBs contain a small amount of mercury sealed inside (about enough to cover the tip of a ballpoint pen), that can be harmful if released into the environment from a broken bulb ([www.epa.gov/mercury](http://www.epa.gov/mercury)). CFBs are perfectly safe to use **and** they can be recycled.

To keep mercury from being released into the environment, the bulbs should **not** go into the garbage.

- Information on recycling CFBs can be found at [www.takeitbacknetwork.org](http://www.takeitbacknetwork.org) or by calling (206) 296-4466. Participating businesses recycle CFBs and straight fluorescent tubes for a small fee.

The largest man-made sources of mercury are coal-fired power plants, which generate about 40 percent of the mercury emissions in the U.S. More than 90 percent of City Light's electricity comes from clean, renewable hydroelectric power; but when we need to buy power on the open market, it is typically energy from coal and other fossil fuel sources. Your conservation efforts reduce our need to buy power and allow us to sell excess **clean** energy into the market. By using **and** recycling CFBs, you are reducing energy consumption and protecting the environment.



## Our natural environment

*Seattle City Light employee Liz Ablow (5th from left) guides Emerson Elementary School students during a utility-sponsored field trip to the Cedar River, where they learn about rivers and view salmon returning to spawn. The students wear salmon-motif polarized sunglasses to cut the glare on sunny days, allowing them to see the fish underwater.*

# Generator basics

- Always operate portable generators outdoors, away from windows and vents and ventilated so that exhaust fumes will not enter the house.
- Generators come in many types, sizes and prices. The simplest back-up generator is a small portable generator that delivers electrical energy through an extension cord directly to the specific appliances you wish to energize, such as refrigerators and lamps.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions on the use of power generators.
- Never connect a generator directly to household wiring. Generator power for permanently connected electrical equipment, such as furnaces and water heaters, requires a more sophisticated wiring system for the generator. A transfer switch is needed to supply generator power through a household circuit. The switch must be installed by a licensed electrician, inspected by the Department of Planning and Development, and approved by Seattle City Light.
- Improperly installed equipment may pose extreme danger to your family and to utility crews.

For more information, visit [www.metrokc.gov/permits/fire/safety/generators.aspx](http://www.metrokc.gov/permits/fire/safety/generators.aspx).

## Consumers beware!

Customers with foreign surnames and the elderly are sometimes the target of con artists that call on the phone posing as utility bill collectors. They claim there's a problem with payment of the customer's bill and demand credit card information to resolve it.

▶ Do not give out your credit card information over the phone. Get the name and telephone number of anyone who calls and represents him or herself as a City Light employee.

▶ Call City Light at **(206) 684-3000** during

business hours (Monday - Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) to verify the request.

▶ Seattle City Light never asks customers over the telephone for credit card information to pay their bills.

▶ We do not call customers on weekends.

▶ City Light provides at least two written warnings to customers who are about to have their power turned off, asking them to contact the utility directly to make a payment.

## Helping others brightens lives

If you would like to help people who are struggling to pay their electric bill, please return this coupon or donate online at [www.seattle.gov/light/help/share/](http://www.seattle.gov/light/help/share/). Your contribution is tax deductible, and 100 percent goes directly to benefit customers in need. City Light's Project Share fund relies solely on customer donations.

To qualify for Project Share assistance, customers must be income-eligible. If you have questions about Project Share or our low-income assistance programs, call **(206) 684-3000**.

On behalf of Seattle City Light and Project Share recipients, **thank you!**



## Notice to our customers

**Utility bills are often used for proof of residency. The names of each person paying the bill should be listed on the account. If your name is not on the account, you may not be able to provide proof of residency. Call (206) 684-3000 to request that we add or delete names to your account. Please have your service address and account number handy.**

*Seattle City Light is a publicly owned utility dedicated to exceeding our customers' expectations in producing and delivering low-cost, reliable power in an environmentally responsible and safe way. We are committed to delivering the best customer service experience of any utility in the nation.*



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This newsletter is available in alternate formats upon request. Translated newsletter information is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Somali, Tagalog and Korean. Call **(206) 684-3000**. [www.seattle.gov/light](http://www.seattle.gov/light)

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## Project Share donation *Warm hearts, Warm homes*

☐ I already contribute to Project Share and would like to increase my donation amount.

☐ I am a new Project Share contributor.

I authorize Seattle City Light to add \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to each of my electric bills for the Project Share account for at least one year (6 bills per year).\*

OR

Enclosed is a check payable to Project Share in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_, a one-time contribution.

I understand that these voluntary contributions will be placed in a separate Project Share account. These funds will be used only for emergencies to assist income-eligible customers pay their electricity bills.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Day phone number (include area code) \_\_\_\_\_

Service address \_\_\_\_\_

1 - \_\_\_\_\_

City Light account number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail coupon to: City of Seattle, Treasury Services, PO Box 34017, Seattle, WA 98124-1017**

**\* Note: Please renew your pledge if your service address changes. Call (206) 684-3000 if you wish to change your donation status after one year.**